CHAPTER SIX:
LIFE IN THE COTTON KINGDOM

CHAPTER SUMMARY

As cotton grew as a cash crop across the South, slavery also expanded through the domestic slave trade, with Eastern slaves shipped South and West. Most slaves during the period of 1820 to 1860 remained agricultural workers, tending cotton, tobacco or rice. Life varied according to the type of plantation, with rice cultivation generally allowing slaves some levels of autonomy, sugar offering the most demanding labor, and cotton being the most common. About one-quarter of all slaves avoided the fields and worked as house servants or in the skilled trades. Although house or skilled work was less physically demanding, these slaves faced the constant oversight of the master and his family. Slaves also worked in urban areas, sometimes hiring themselves out and gaining freedom from their work. Others worked in Southern factories, producing textiles, chewing tobacco, iron or lumber. Although treatment of slaves varied by the owner’s personality, the system of slavery rested entirely upon a threat of force, should assigned tasks not be carried out. Few slaves lived without whippings or some form of physical punishment. Despite difficulties, slaves formed and tried to maintain family life. Children faced short childhoods, pushed into adult labor before their teenage years. Slave women faced the danger of childbirth and high infant mortality rates, and also the constant threat of sexual exploitation. Other elements of slave life were comparatively better. Although lacking today’s standards, slave diets and general health were actually far better than slaves in other regions and generally comparable to whites. Slaves learned multiple coping skills as they moved through life, including the use of deception and adopting certain aspects of Christianity to help them cope with difficult situations.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Understand the various types of, and the variations between, agricultural work performed by slaves.

Understand the differences and similarities between the duties, difficulties and advantages of house slaves, skilled slaves, urban slaves and agricultural slaves.

Understand the role of punishment in slavery, as well as the difficulties of the slave trade within the American states.

Understand the characteristics of slave families in the South, including variations by age, gender.

Understand the differences between health and diet of American slaves versus other slaves.

Understand the importance of slave culture, including folktales, the use of deception and religion.

CHAPTER OUTLINE

I. Introduction

II. The Expansion of Slavery
   A. Slave Population Growth
   B. Ownership of Slaves in the Old South
      1. Number owning slaves
      2. Number of slaves owned
      3. African-American slave ownership
III. Slave Labor in Agriculture
   A. Tobacco
      1. Labor
      2. Punishments
   B. Rice
      1. Labor/Size
      2. Punishments
   C. Sugar
      1. Labor
      2. Conditions
   D. Cotton
      1. Importance
      2. Culture
      3. Varieties
      4. Effects on slavery
      5. Labor
   E. Other Crops
      1. Wheat
      2. Hemp

IV. House Servants and Skilled Slaves
   A. House Servants
      1. Work
      2. Advantages/Disadvantages
   B. Skilled Slaves
      1. Work
      2. Advantages/Disadvantages

V. Urban and Industrial Slavery
   A. Urban Slavery
      1. Population
      2. Independence
      3. Work
   B. Industrial Slavery
      1. Types
      2. Advantages

VI. Punishment
   A. Justifications
   B. Resistance

VII. The Domestic Slave Trade
   A. Resistance
   B. Numbers
   C. Path Taken
   D. Horrors/Difficulties

VIII. Slave Families
   A. Reasons for Development of Families
Chapter 6 | Life in the Cotton Kingdom

B. Role in Slave Community
C. Wedding Ceremonies
D. Married Life
E. Children
   1. Role of extended family
   2. Infant mortality rates
   3. Care of children
   4. Growing up
F. Sexual Exploitation
   1. Rape
   2. Justifications
G. Diet
   1. Deficiencies
   2. Compared with others
   3. African-American cuisine
H. Clothing
   1. Materials/Allotment
   2. Individual Clothes
I. Health
   1. Common Diseases
   2. Difference from Europeans
   3. Compared with others
   4. Remedies

IX. The Socialization of Slaves
   A. Folktales
   B. Importance of Deception

X. Religion
   A. Biracial Congregations
   B. Christianity’s Message to Slaves

XI. The Character of Slavery and Slaves
   A. Ulrich B. Phillips
   B. Post 1950s Historians
   C. Stanley Elkins

XII. Conclusion

TEST MATERIALS

MAP QUESTIONS
(Locate the following regions, geographical features or political entities on a map)
Old South
Louisiana
Alabama
Mississippi
Black Belt
New Orleans